(c) Yes, Sir. The Govt. has decided to spend money out of the interest accured on Corpus Fund to safeguard and develop the culture of our country.

(d) It has been decided to spend an amount equal to the amount contributed by a private sponsor for a cultural project. However, other proposals which do not have a private sponsor are decided upon by the Governing Council of the National Culture Fund.

Financial assistance to Shri Bismillah Khan

†990. PROF. RAM DEO BHANDARY: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that Internationally renowned Shehnai Player, Shri Bismillah Khan is ill and his economic position is also very deplorable;

(b) whether Government have considered to provide him treatment and financial assistance; and

(c) if so, the immediate and permanent scheme to provide assistance to Shri Khan?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN): (a) There have been media reports to this effect.

(b) and (c) Ustad Bismillah Khan has been honoured by the Sangeet Natak Akademi with the Akademi Award as well as the Akademi Fellowship. Awardees and Fellows of Sangeet Natak Akademi are covered under a Medical Insurance scheme by which they can claim up to Rs. 1 lakh per annum for hospitalisation- expenses. Besides, Prime Minister has sanctioned Rs. 2 lakhs as relief to Ustad Bismillah Khan. State Governments of Uttar Pradesh and Punjab have also offered financial assistance of Rs. 5 lakhs each.

Amendment to the antiquities and Arts Treasures Act, 1972

991. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE:
SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY:

Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(a) whether, of late, there has been a tremendous increase in the cases of theft of idols, antiques and terracotta paintings from various temples in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof for the last three years and the steps taken to prevent the thefts and smuggling;

(c) whether it is proposed to amend the Antiquities and Arts Treasures Act, 1972 for the purpose of dealing with these offences more effectively; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN): (a) and (b) No, Sir. However, a statement showing the cases of theft of idols, antiques etc. from various temples under the protection of the Archaeological Survey of India, during the last three years, is enclosed at Annexure [See Appendix 199 Annexure No. 4]. Measures have been drawn up by the Archeological Survey of India in consultation with the enforcing agencies like the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Customs and the State Governments to check the theft of antiquities and their smuggling by stepping up vigilance and intensifying checking at the Customs exit points, as well as by strict enforcement of the Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972. Armed guards have also been deployed at selected centrally-protected monuments, museums and temples under the Archaeological Survey of India. Furthermore, apart from its own Watch and Ward staff, the Archaeological Survey of India, also engages the services of private security agencies for protection of the centrally-protected monuments, sculpture sheds and museums, to provide security and keep a watch over the antiquities housed in these monuments, sites, museums and temples.

(c) and (d) It is under consideration.

Opening of tourist offices in Shanghai

992. SHRIMATI SHABANA AZMI:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are looking East to shore up its tourist arrivals;